

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Special Olympics Summer Games coming to Peel Region

From July 13 to 16, Peel Region will be hosting Ontario's Special Olympics Summer Games.

Each province and territory hosts its own Games on a four-year competition cycle, alternating between spring, summer and winter. The Games will feature athletics, bocce, soccer, softball and golf, with more than 700 athletes expected to participate.

The vision of Special Olympics was set in motion by American President John F. Kennedy's sister Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who formed Camp Shriver in 1962 by inviting people with intellectual disabilities to a daycamp in her backyard. The inaugural Special Olympics was held at Soldier Field in Chicago July 20, 1968 with athletes with intellectual disabilities from the U.S.A. and Canada competing in more than 200 events. The following summer, the first Canadian Special Olympics were held in Toronto.

This year, events will be held across Peel, including track and field at the Terry Fox Stadium in Brampton; bocce at Century Gardens in Brampton; soccer at Huron Park in Mississauga; softball at Dunton Athletic Fields in Mississauga; golf at the Caledon County Club in Caledon; as well as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies at the Powerade Centre. You can visit www.specialolympics2017games.com to get more details about the schedule. All events are free of charge and you do not need a ticket to attend.

The Special Olympics are a great opportunity for individuals with intellectual disabilities from across Ontario to come together and participate. In the words of the Athletes' Oath, "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

If you would like to give back and support the amazing event, you can help through the Adopt an Athlete program. For a total of \$500, you can help cover the cost of an athlete to get to the Games.

This year's Summer Games will feature Caledon's own Jason Scorcia. Jason has competed in many Special Olympics. He will be golfing this weekend. Jason is a tireless ambassador for Special Olympics and I am pleased to hear that the Special Olympics are coming to his hometown.

If you know a friend or a family member who would want to become involved with Special Olympics Ontario, I highly encourage you to visit www.specialolympicsontario.com to find out more. In order to be eligible to participate and compete, the individual must be diagnosed with an intellectual disability. It is a great opportunity to have fun, develop skills and build self-esteem.

You can also give back to the community and sign up to be a volunteer to help individuals with intellectual disabilities engage in sport. According to Special Olympics Ontario, there are more than 23,000 registered athletes participating in 18 core sports across Ontario. These athletes are supported by more than 10,000 volunteers. You can volunteer as a coach, at a local sports club, as a member of the local community council, with a Special Olympics program or at major competitions and sporting events.

I wish all of the athletes and their supporters the very best!

